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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Lebanon - France in UNIFIL -
President Bush's Press Conference Iran
PARIS - Tuesday, August 22, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Lebanon - France in UNIFIL - President Bush's Press Conference
Iran

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

France's "hesitations" about taking command of the UNIFIL, Italy's "availability" and President Bush's press conference yesterday are today's lead international stories. Le Figaro headlines "George Bush Calls on France to Commit More," while the inside story's reads: "G.W. Bush Urges France and Europe to Send More Troops." Liberation's front page reads "Chirac's Sidestepping" while the lead story is entitled: "France: Minimal Presence and Embarrassment." The editorial comments: "France, which is always ready to give lessons, gives the impression it is backing out." Yesterday afternoon's Le Monde article on the U.S. media bashing of France is entitled: "In

U.S., Bush Alone Defends a Much Criticized France." Both Le Monde and Le Figaro quote the Washington Post's "Where Are the French?" (See Part C)

TF1 reported George Bush's call for "an urgent international force for Lebanon." FR2 mentioned his decision to send \$230 million to help reconstruction. Economic Les Echos also reports "the U.S. President's decision to increase aid for Lebanon for a total amount of 230 million dollars." This morning FR2 and Radio France Info reported Kofi Anan's decision to go to the Middle East to "find a solution for the crisis." In Liberation, socialist Parliamentarian Gerard Bapt pens an op-ed calling on Kofi Annan to "fill in the gaps of resolution 1701 which has simply called for a 'cessation of hostilities.'"

The media quotes several French politicians and experts about France's stance. Liberation interviews UMP Parliamentarian Pierre Lellouche: "France was never mistaken about the diagnosis: Iran and Syria, through Hezbollah, were clearly fingered as being behind the crisis... And because the crisis was all about Iran's nuclear ambitions, Chirac made an overture to Tehran... But deploying a force while Hezbollah has not been disarmed is like cauterizing a wooden leg... The UN resolution is a half-way measure... The real winner in this affair is Iran... which has managed to galvanize the Arab streets through Hezbollah's actions... Hezbollah's money and weapons come from Tehran: Syria serves only as a stockpile... Iran's regional awakening as a superpower is truly revolutionary... Lebanon served as grounds for maneuvers in the confrontation between Israel and Iran." For Bertrand Badie of the Institute for Political Studies, "France's reluctance can easily be explained: it is because resolution 1701 is poorly drafted. It does not open the door to a political perspective and does not define the force's mission." Badie further hints both at UN impotence and at trouble in U.S.-led operations. "The resolution of the Kosovo conflict is at an impasse...not to mention the evolution of the intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq." Former Socialist PM Lionel Jospin criticized Israel as reported in Liberation and Le Figaro: "As usual, in the face of aggressions against it, Israel has over-reacted... and increased the number of its adversaries in the region; and instead of isolating its enemies... Israel serves their political interests."

Iran is another major international story. Le Figaro titles "Iran on the Road to Confrontation" while Liberation's wire-inspired report is entitled: "Iran Holds On to Its Nuclear Program." For La Croix, "Iran Is Actively Pursuing its Nuclear Program." (See Part C) In Le Parisien, Bruno Tertrais says "economic sanctions against Tehran can be effective only if they really hurt. Iranian officials must be deprived of movements abroad ... and their holdings frozen... For the moment there is no immediate risk of a military confrontation with Iran. Neither the U.S. nor Israel are ready for that... In years to come, it is a possibility that cannot be excluded." Europe-1 radio interviewed CERI's Therese Delpeche, who said that "Iran is playing for time in order to advance its nuclear program."

Saddam Hussein's trial to answer for 'the Kurdish genocide' gets wide coverage. "As is his habit, Saddam accused the Shiite judge in charge of the trial of being a mouthpiece for the Americans" Le Figaro reports. Every network mentioned Hussein's trial in Baghdad, with TF1 dedicating a full report to the story. Its journalist said that the former Iraqi leader was "pugnacious" and refused to answer simple questions. TF1 also reported that some images of the trial were being censored.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Lebanon - France in UNIFIL - President Bush's Press Conference

"A Narrow Path"

Pierre Haski in left-of-center Liberation (08/22): "'Waiting for Jacques...' was yesterday's ironic commentary in the NYT editorial... France, which is always ready to give lessons, gives the impression it is backing out... While the Anglo-Saxon press was initially surprised by France's messages of leadership... it is today ready to clamor 'we told you so...' France's path is a narrow one, caught as it is between the risk of seeing resolution 1701 and its edifice tumbling down for lack of international action and that of forging ahead into a dangerous mission that could clearly be

suicidal. The new resolution which President Bush called for will change nothing: the region's geo-strategic make up will remain unchanged, with a bellicose Iran, a Syria with whom France does not want to speak and players that may well return to the mat. The solution may reside in painful diplomatic revisions. While France has the right to demand guarantees, it could lose all credibility through such hesitations, which in turn might trigger a new war."

"G.W Bush Urges France and Europe to Send More Troops to Lebanon" Guillemette Faure in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/22): "Deployment of troops in Lebanon is an 'urgent' necessity, President Bush reiterated. He urged his 'friends and allies' to strengthen the international force as soon as possible, adding that UN resolutions tend to fail because they are not implemented... President Bush appeared to show more patience towards France than U.S. politicians and the media... 'Condoleezza Rice has just received a lesson in French and UN credibility' said the Wall Street Journal, which is traditionally anti-French. More surprising were the editorials from the NYT, the Washington Post and the LA Times, which are traditionally left-leaning... According to the U.S. press, France wanted to be in the limelight when it came to drafting the resolution, but shied away from actually sending troops... This ambivalence is illustrated in the contradiction between Ambassador de La Sabliere's comment at the UN that France 'was in a position to quickly send troops' and Chirac's later decision."

"In U.S., Bush Alone Defends a Much Criticized France." Corine Lesnes in left-of-center Le Monde (08/22): "The world's turned upside down! While politicians and the media in the U.S. criticized France, the Bush Administration was defending it. Last Friday President Bush said France was 'a friend and an ally...' But political circles were much less diplomatic... The French decision (on UNIFIL) has been interpreted as reluctance to send troops to Lebanon and served to reopen the traditional box of clichs about France and the image of the cowardly French who are always ready to back out."

"Italy Ready to Take Over"

Alain Barluet in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/22): "Israel has asked Italy to take over from France. Rome did not hesitate long... even if it will be up to Kofi Annan to finally decide on the UNIFIL leadership... Meanwhile, not much is expected from the meeting in Brussels on Wednesday, called by FM Douste-Blazy to 'clarify' the EU-25 contributions to the UNIFIL."

Iran

"Iran on the Road to Confrontation"

Delphine Minoui in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/22): "Iran's stubbornness and its refusal to suspend its uranium enrichment leave little hope of reaching a compromise with Tehran... After three years of laborious negotiations, the Europeans are tired of listening to the same Iranian refrain. Today, what adds to their concerns is the obvious radicalization of the regime... Everyone agrees that the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon... has served to confirm Teheran's decision to stand up to the international community... The Iranian regime is demonstrating its strength and unity, but internal weaknesses and contradictions are beginning to show... Even if an American attack remains improbable, because of the situation in Iraq, the threat of sanctions is looming and according to a number of experts they could be fatal to the country."

"Iran Actively Pursues Its Nuclear Program"

Jean-Christophe Ploquin in Catholic La Croix (08/22): "Iran's latest announcement that it will continue its nuclear enrichment with force seems to sound the death knell for the West's hopes of reaching a compromise... Iran's obstinacy may well lead to UNSC sanctions... The only note of optimism came from Brussels where Javier Solana said that both parties were still 'open' to the continuation of meetings on the Iranian nuclear case." HOFMANN